



Department of Defense **DIRECTIVE**

March 2, 1997
NUMBER 4500.56

USD(A&T)

SUBJECT: DoD Policy on the Use of Government Aircraft and Air Travel

- References: (a) Deputy Secretary of Defense Policy Memorandum, subject as above, October 1, 1995 (hereby canceled)
- (b) **Office** of Management and Budget Circular No. A-126, "Improving the Management and Use of Government Aircraft," May 22, 1992
 - (c) Presidential Memorandum, "Restricted Use of Government **Aircraft**," February 10, 1993
 - (d) **Office** of Management and Budget Bulletin No. 93-11, "Fiscal Responsibility and Reducing Perquisites," April 19, 1993
 - (e) through (j), see enclosure 1

A. PURPOSE

This Directive:

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1. Supersedes reference (a).
 2. Implements references (b) through (e) by establishing policy and assigning responsibilities for the use of Government aircraft by DoD officials.
 3. Supplements DoD Directive 4500.9, section C. (reference (f)).

B. APPLICABILITY

This Directive applies to the Office of the Secretary of Defense (**OSD**), the Military Departments, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Combatant Commands, the Inspector General of the Department of Defense, the Defense Agencies, and the DoD Field Activities (hereafter referred to collectively as "the DoD Components").

C. DEFINITION

DoD Senior Officials. General or flag officers and civilian employees of the Senior Executive Service, or equivalent, and higher level employees.

D. POLICY

It is DoD policy that ~~the~~ use of DoD transportation resources is limited to official DoD requirements. It is essential that managers and commanders at all levels prevent misuse of trans-

portation resources as well as the perception of their misuse. Enclosure 2 provides policy guidance for the use of airlift resources (fixed and rotary wing aircraft) by DoD **officials** and **family** members, **non-DoD officials**, and non-Federal travelers, for official and **unofficial** travel. Enclosure 3 provides a listing of air transportation resources that may be employed to support these travelers. The objective of this Directive is to make more effective use of DoD airlift resources and minimize costs.

E. RESPONSIBILITIES

1. The Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Technology shall establish policies and provide guidance to the DoD Components concerning the **efficient** and effective use of DoD air transportation resources.

2. The Heads of the DoD Components shall ensure that regulations and implementing procedures governing the use and management of travel using DoD airlift resources are revised to ensure full compliance with this Directive.

F. EFFECTIVE DATE

This Directive is effective immediately.



John P. White
Deputy Secretary of Defense

Enclosures -3

1. References
2. Policy Guidance on the Use of Government Aircraft
3. Methods of Air Transportation Available

REFERENCES, continued

- (e) White House Memorandum, "Use of Government Aircraft for Official Business," July 30, 1993
- (f) DoD Directive 4500.9, "Transportation and **Traffic** Management; January 26, 1989
- (g) DoD **451** 5.13-R, "Air Transportation Eligibility," November 1994, authorized by DoD Directive 4500.9, January 26, 1989
- (h) DoD Directive 4500.43, "Operational Support **Airlift** (OSA)," October 28, 1996
- (i) Joint Federal Travel Regulations, Volume 1, "Uniformed Services Members," current edition
- (j) Joint Travel Regulations, Volume 2, "Department of Defense Civilian Personnel," current edition

POLICY GUIDANCE ON THE USE OF GOVERNMENT AIRCRAFT

A. GENERAL POLICY

1. Travel on military aircraft (**MilAir**) is a premium mode of travel involving high costs and limited resources. DoD senior **officials** and airlift authorizing **officials** should restrict travel by **MilAir** based on considerations such as purpose of the trip, method of transportation required, and priority of travel if using **MilAir**. Every effort should be made to minimize **MilAir** cost. In that regard, the type of aircraft used shall be based on minimum cost and size necessary to **satisfy** the mission requirement. Organizations shall not schedule training missions whose principal purpose is to accommodate the travel of senior DoD **officials**. Additionally, maximum advance planning is emphasized so that scheduling conflicts do not dictate the use of **MilAir**.

2. The purpose of the travel is to be determined by the individual and his or her next level supervisor. DoD **airlift** authorizing officials shall ensure that an **official**, rather than personal, purpose is **served** by the travel. The purpose of travel determines the category, a designation that accords a traveler specific privileges and confers obligations. This enclosure addresses the categories of travel based on OMB Circular A-126 (reference (b)): for "required use," "other official travel," and "unofficial travel." This enclosure does not alter the space available travel policies, special procedures for military assistance advisory groups or military mission chiefs, and defense attaches, as in DoD 4515.13-R (reference (g)).

3. The method of travel generally involves a choice between commercial transportation or **MilAir**. **MilAir** shall not be used if commercial airline or aircraft (including charter) service is reasonably available; i.e., able to meet the traveler's departure **and/or** arrival requirements in a 24-hour period, unless highly unusual circumstances present a clear and present danger, an emergency exists, use of **MilAir** is more cost-effective than commercial air, or other compelling operational considerations make commercial transportation unacceptable. Specific methods of air travel are addressed in enclosure 3.

4. The priority of travel on **MilAir** is to be determined on the basis of this enclosure and on the basis of the traveler's mission. Rank, grade, or position alone is not sufficient to **justify** support of **MilAir** requests. Scheduling and approving **officials** shall follow this enclosure and the Airlift Priority System in DoD Directive 4500.43 (reference (h)).

5. Rotary-wing aircraft may be used only when cost is favorable as compared to ground transportation, or when the use of ground transportation would have a significant adverse impact on the ability of the senior **official** to effectively accomplish the purpose of the travel. This policy applies to **all** officers and employees of the Department of Defense.

B. AUTHORIZED USES OF AIR TRAVEL

1. **“Required Use.”** Such designated travelers are required to use **MilAir** due to one or more of the following: their continuous requirement for secure communications; for security; or for responsive transportation to satisfy exceptional scheduling requirements dictated by frequent short-notice travel, which makes commercial transportation unacceptable.

a. The President has designated the Secretary of Defense as a “required use” traveler for **official** travel on the grounds that a threat exists, which could endanger lives, or continuous 24-hour secure communication is required. “Required use” unofficial travel performed by the Secretary of Defense must be approved by the President or his designee on a case-by-case basis. The Secretary of Defense and all travelers accompanying the Secretary of Defense on **MilAir**, including family members or other invited guests, shall reimburse the Government for any unofficial travel at the **full** coach fare, as set forth in OMB Circular A-126 (reference (b)). Travel of accompanying **unofficial** travelers must also comply with subsection B.3., below.

b. The Secretary of Defense may designate other key DoD **officials** as “required use” travelers. The Secretary of Defense has determined that the criteria of subsection B. 1., above, have been met and designates the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of **Staff**; the U.S. Commander in Chief, Europe (when carrying out the duties of the Supreme Allied Commander, Europe); and the U.S. Commander in Chief, Atlantic (when carrying out the duties of the Supreme Allied Commander, Atlantic), as “required use” travelers for official and unofficial travel. “Required use” unofficial travel may be performed by these **officials** only upon advance notification to the Secretary of Defense on a case-by-case basis. These **officials** and all unofficial travelers **accompanying** them on **MilAir**, including family members or other invited guests, shall reimburse the Government for any unofficial travel at the full coach fare as set forth in reference (b). Travel of accompanying unofficial travelers must also comply with subsection B.3., below.

c. The Secretary of Defense has determined that the criteria of subsection B. 1., above, have been met and designates as “required use” travelers for official travel only the Deputy Secretary of Defense; the Secretaries of the Military Departments; the Vice Chairman and Joint Chiefs of **Staff**; the Commanders of the Combatant Commands; and four-star general and/or flag officers. The Secretaries of the Military Departments may apply more stringent restrictions for general and/or flag officers assigned to positions in their respective Military Departments. Requests for other individuals to be either temporarily or permanently designated as a “required use” traveler should be forwarded through normal channels to the Secretary of Defense. Retired four-star general and/or flag officers traveling on official business for the Department of Defense are not “required use” travelers.

d. All “required use” travelers must submit the information specified in section F., below, which is necessary to **satisfy** the documentation and reporting requirements of the Department of Defense. Additionally, “required use” travelers must document a mission necessity to use **MilAir** for permanent change of station travel and must obtain prior authorization from either the Secretary of Defense for **officers** being reassigned to joint positions, or the Secretaries of the

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Military Departments, as appropriate, for **officers** being reassigned to positions in their respective Military Departments.

2. Other Official Travel. Such travel is normally accomplished using commercial transportation and is for the conduct of DoD official business other than that discussed in subsection B. 1., above. Other official travel may include travel to address matters such as giving speeches, attending conferences or meetings, making site visits to facilities, and permanent change of station.

a. Requests for other **official** travel using **MilAir** must be submitted in writing to the appropriate authorizing **officials** in section D., below, for approval. **MilAir** shall not be approved for other **official** travel if commercial airline or aircraft (including charter) service is reasonably available; i.e., commercial airline or airlift service is available to effectively **fulfill** the mission requirement and is able to meet the traveler's departure and arrival requirements in a 24-hour period, unless highly unusual circumstances present a clear and present danger, an emergency exists, use of Government **aircraft** is more cost-effective than commercial air, or other compelling operational considerations make commercial transportation unacceptable.

b. Requesters must determine and document whether commercial service is reasonably available. To determine that commercial service is not reasonably available, the traveler must clearly demonstrate that a valid **official** reason for the use of **MilAir** exists, other than for personal convenience. Requesters must cite scheduling requirements and why they cannot be changed, whether secure communications are required, or other such appropriate factors,

c. For cost comparisons, requesters should use **MilAir** flying hour (including any positioning or repositioning flying hours) cost data for the requested **aircraft** found in tables of aircraft reimbursement rates (the office that schedules or validates **MilAir** requests may assist) and compare it to the total cost for the party to use commercial air travel at available coach **fare** rates. In determining the commercial costs, the cost of rental cars, the cost of lodging and meals if the party must remain overnight, and other such appropriate factors may be considered. By combining separate **MilAir** requests to fully utilize aircraft, **MilAir** costs for separate travel requests can be lowered and may compare more favorably with costs associated with commercial air travel. That cost comparison may be accomplished by a centralized airlift scheduling **office** when cost is part of the decision process to provide **MilAir**. Authorizing officials may provisionally approve a request on the basis that, if consolidated with another request(s), it is determined to be cost-effective. In accordance with OMB Circular A-126 (reference (b)), when an aircraft has been scheduled to satisfy a mission requirement, secondary use of that **aircraft** for other official travel does not require a cost comparison.

d. Requests for other official travel on **MilAir** must contain the **information** in section F., below. That provides data necessary to **satisfy** the documentation and reporting requirements of the Department of Defense. Those requests must be signed by the senior traveling official **certifying** the need to use **MilAir**. That signature authority may not be delegated.

3. Unofficial Travel. Such travel is by a **family** member, **non-DoD** civilian, or non-Federal traveler only when accompanying a senior DoD or other Federal official who is traveling on a

military aircraft on official business. This category of travel differs from the space available privilege in DoD 4515. 13-R, Chapter 6 (reference (g)) since it is limited to travel in the company of a senior DoD official and is reimbursable by the traveler at the full coach fare, as required by OMB Circular A-126 (reference (b)). Such **unofficial** travel is not authorized on **MilAir** unless the aircraft is already scheduled for an **official** purpose; this noninterference use does not require a larger aircraft than needed for the official purpose; official travelers are not displaced; it results in negligible additional cost to the Government; and the Government is reimbursed at the **full** coach **fare** (the senior DoD **official** shall attach to his or her travel voucher a personal check made payable to the Treasurer of the United States and shall include a travel **office** printout that reflects the **full** coach free). **Unofficial** travel shall be **carefully** controlled by requiring approval in advance and in writing by the approval officials in section D., below. "Required use" travelers shall approve all **unofficial** travelers who accompany them, provided that the travel is in compliance with this subsection.

C. PRIORITIES OF TRAVEL ON MILAIR

The priority of travel on MilAir is determined primarily on the basis of mission impact. Rank, grade, or position alone is not sufficient to **justify** support of MilAir requests. Once authorized, a **MilAir** request shall be considered by the airlift assignment element (scheduler) in relative priority for use of the limited airlift resources available. Although a request may have merit, it may be denied based on higher priority requests in the same time-frame. Authorizing officials and airlift schedulers shall follow the priorities established in DoD Directive 4500.43 (reference (h)).

D. AUTHORIZING OFFICIALS FOR MILAIR TRAVEL REQUESTS

1. Requests for common-user airlift shall be processed for approval through standard procedures by installation or commercial transportation **offices** serving DoD activities.

2. Requests for **MilAir** by other than DoD senior **officials** who are eligible for air transportation under reference (g) shall be processed for approval through existing standard procedures.

3. Requests for MilAir from outside the Department of Defense shall be processed for approval under reference (g).

4. Authorizing officials for senior **officials'** MilAir travel requests (other than "required use" that has already been approved). The **following officials** shall review and approve DoD senior official MilAir requests to ensure that the proper method of air transportation is used, as follows:

a. The Executive Secretary of the Department of Defense for special air mission (SAM) and operational support **airlift (OSA)** support for requests from the OSD, the Defense Agencies, and requests from outside the Department of Defense where Secretary of Defense or designee approval is required by reference (g).

- - b. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, or designee, for requests from members assigned to the Joint Staff.

c. The Commanders of the Combatant Commands, or their designees, for requests from members and employees assigned to their commands. When joint or dual-hatted **personnel** are traveling on behalf of their joint command, approval must be obtained through their joint command approval authority and not through their individual Service channels. This authority may be **further** delegated in writing, but may not be delegated below the major command chief of staff, or equivalent level, for travel requests from DoD senior officials. ("Major commands" are those normally commanded by 4-star generals and/or admirals) Additionally, these authorizing officials may approve local travel for senior DoD **officials** from outside their commands when invited for **official** business.

d. The Secretaries of the Military Departments for requests from their Military Departments. That authority may be **further** delegated in writing, but may not be delegated below the major command chief of staff, or equivalent, level for travel requests **from** DoD senior officials.

E. FUNDED TRAVEL BY FAMILY MEMBERS TO ACCOMPANY DOD PERSONNEL WHO ARE ON OFFICIAL BUSINESS

1. As a general rule, a **family** member may not accompany his or her DoD sponsor who is traveling on **official** business. A family member's travel maybe approved (see subsections E.2. and E.3., below) where there is an unquestionably official **function** in which the family member is actually to participate in an official capacity, or such travel is in U.S. interest because of a diplomatic or public relations benefit to the United States. Such participation is normally limited to spouses and is representational in nature. As such, travel is allowed on a mission noninterference basis only, and must be supported with invitational travel orders, which normally shall authorize reimbursement of transportation costs only, not to include per diem and other expenses under the **JFTR**, volume 1, and the **JTR**, volume 2, (references (i) and (j)). Funded family members shall travel in the company of their DoD sponsor on **MilAir**. However, unusual circumstances may occur that may necessitate exceptions to this general requirement. Such circumstances may include unplanned or unanticipated schedule changes or compelling mission requirements of the DoD sponsor. Under those unusual circumstances the funded family member shall travel in the most cost-effective manner available, which may include **MilAir**, subject to the written approval of the appropriate designated authority.

2. Certain officials specified in **DoD 4515.13-R** (reference (g)), including Code 2 civilians, 4-star general and/or flag officers, and certain 3-star general and/or flag officers serving as overseas or combined commanders, may approve transportation, per diem, and/or other expense allowances for their spouses on a case-by-case basis using the criteria in subsection E. 1., above, and shall personally sign the invitational travel orders. This authority does not constitute blanket approval authority. Requests by other officials for approval of family member travel under the criteria in subsection E. 1., above, shall be submitted in writing on a case-by-case basis to the same designated approval authority for the sponsor, as in section D., above.

3. Requests that seek approval for family member travel with finding for per diem and/or other expense allowances must clearly demonstrate that travel is essential to accomplishing the mission. These requests shall include strong evidence of benefit to the Department of Defense beyond **fulfilling** a simple, albeit important, representational role.

F. REQUEST FOR USE OF MILAIR BY SENIOR DOD OFFICIALS

A written request is required for travel on **MilAir**. The DoD Component that schedules and/or operates the **aircraft** may prescribe the request format required to satisfy documentation and reporting requirements. The amount of information provided by the requester may vary depending on the category of authorized use.

1. Requests from approved “required use” travelers shall include the following:

- a. Names and titles (or grade and/or rank) of all travelers.
- b. Purpose of travel.
- c. Itinerary, including required departure or arrival times.
- d. Any special travel requirements (i.e., secure communications or others).

2. Requests from other **official** travelers and those requesting approval for “required use” travel on a case-by-case basis shall include the following:

- a. Names and titles (or grade and/or rank) of all travelers.
- b. Travelers’ Military Department and/or Agency.
- c. Purpose of travel.

d. Itinerary, including required departure or arrival times, and an explanation as to why scheduling requirements cannot be changed to permit the use of commercial air.

e. Justification for use of **MilAir** to include cost comparison with commercial service, if applicable.

f. A statement that the travel policy requirements of this Directive have been met.

g. Signature of the senior traveling **official**. That signature may not be delegated.

3. Requests from any traveler that includes **MilAir** travel for personal reasons or **unofficial** travel must include the following:

a. Amount required to be reimbursed to the Government (attach an airline reservation printout reflecting the full coach fare).

b. A statement of intent to reimburse the **Government** for the full coach fare. (Payment is made by a personal check payable to the Treasurer of the United States and attached to the travel voucher along with a travel **office** printout showing the full coach fare.)

G. DOCUMENTING THE USE OF MILAIR BY SENIOR DOD OFFICIALS

1. DoD Components shall collect and retain, for 2 years, data on all uses of MilAir. At a minimum, the documentation of each use of MilAir must include the following:

a. The type and tail number of the plane used.

b. The date(s) used.

c. The name(s) of the pilot(s) and flight crew.

d. The purpose of the flight.

e. The route(s) flown.

f. The names of **all** passengers.

2. When Government aircraft are used to support **official** travel, the documentation shall also include evidence that the applicable provisions of this Directive have been satisfied.

3. The documentation described in subsection G. 1., above, is normally retained by the Agency operating the aircraft or as determined by the appropriate DoD Component.

4. Additional documentation and reporting are required for civilian senior **officials**, members of families of such civilian senior **officials**, and non-Federal travelers when using MilAir, as in section H., below.

H. REPORTING AND DOCUMENTING THE USE OF GOVERNMENT AIRCRAFT BY DOD CIVILIAN SENIOR OFFICIALS

1. The Department of Defense is required to report semiannually to the General Services Administration (GSA) each use of MilAir for nonmission (other than "required use") travel by civilian DoD senior **officials**, family members of such officials, and any non-Federal travelers. A second report is required for **all** travel on MilAir by senior civilian **officials** appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate. All military (including general and/or flag **officers**) and DoD non-senior civilians are exempted from the reporting requirements.

2. The U.S. Transportation Command (**USTRANSCOM**) shall be the focal point for collecting the data and compiling a consolidated DoD semiannual report. The **USTRANSCOM** shall forward a consolidated report (both hard copy and disk) for the entire Department of Defense to the GSA with a copy to the Assistant Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Transportation Policy to arrive at the GSA no later than November 30 and May 31 each year. Also, a copy of the report shall be forwarded to each of the Services and the Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff. The USTRANSCOM may issue supplemental instructions for completing those reports, as appropriate.

METHODS OF AIR TRANSPORTATION AVAILABLE

A. COMMERCIAL TRANSPORTATION

That is transportation individually procured through local traffic management offices or installation transportation **offices** in support of **official** duty requirements. In the continental United States (CONUS), commercial transportation services shall be the primary method used for **official** passenger movement. Outside CONUS (OCONUS) commercial air transportation shall be used, in accordance with the JFTR, volume 1, and the JTR, volume 2, (reference (i) and (j)) and shall be limited to U.S. flag air carriers except as otherwise specified by DoD Directive 4500.9 (reference (f)). Such travel is **funded** by the user's organization. Commercial airlines participating in the GSA City Pairs Program are the primary sources of commercial air travel.

B. DOD AIR TRANSPORTATION

1. Common-User Airlift. That is military or commercial **airlift** operated or procured by the USCINCTANS, the DoD Single Manager for Transportation, or military or commercial airlift operated or procured under the direction of a theater commander for support of assigned forces. For OCONUS, common-user airlift shall be the primary means of meeting **official** DoD **international** travel requirements and is obtained through installation transportation or **traffic** management offices. Common-user airlift utilizing "DoD-owned or -controlled" **aircraft** (i.e., commercial aircraft leased or chartered for periods greater than 90 days), is the normal method for moving DoD **personnel** to, from, and between OCONUS and CONUS duty stations and is used in OCONUS to the maximum extent, and is **funded** by the user's organization. If common-user airlift cannot **satisfy** the traveler's requirement, commercial transportation as in section A., above, may be used.

2. OSA. That is travel aboard aircraft procured and operated by military activities to meet high-priority and short notice mission requirements that cannot be satisfied by commercial transportation, common-user airlift, or other organic airlift. OSA aircraft shall be used in peacetime to provide cost-effective training and seasoning of pilots, and for logistics needs to ensure military effectiveness in support of national defense policies. DoD Directive 4500.43 (reference (h)) provides OSA policy guidance, definitions, and responsibilities.

3. SAM. That is travel aboard **specialty** configured aircraft assigned to the 89th **Airlift** Wing used to support only the most important U.S. interest missions and DoD missions where other airlift do not provide the timeliness, security, or communications capability required. Senior officials identified as "DV Code 2 or 3" are eligible to request SAM travel.

4. Other Organic Airlift. That is airlift provided by military aircraft, the primary mission of which is other than carrying passengers, but that has the capacity to carry passengers. Aircraft not designed or normally configured for passenger (**nonaircrew personnel**) carrying capability, such as, but not limited to, fighter **aircraft**, are not to be used for passenger travel. Besides

scheduled military and commercial airlift services, the Department of Defense controls a large number of utility and transport aircraft for support of military operations. Travel is not permitted on those cargo or utility aircraft unless, as follows:

- a. The aircraft is already scheduled for an **official** purpose.
- b. Travel is on a noninterference basis.
- c. The noninterference travel use does not require a larger aircraft than needed for the official purpose.
- d. Already scheduled official travelers or cargo are not displaced.
- e. The travel results in negligible additional cost to the Government. Such travel is funded by the **aircraft** operator's organization.